A VISION OF LOVE REVEALED IN SLEEP

Until the day break
and the shadows flee away

Song of Songs

SIMEON SOLOMON

To Miss Crane

with S. Solomon's best regards.

July 1871.

Then I knew my Soul stood by me, and he and I went forth together.

F. HOLLYER, *Photo.*

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A Vision of Love revealed in Sleep.

UPON the waning of the night, at that time when the stars are pale, and when dreams wrap us about more closely, when a brighter radiance is shed upon our spirits, three sayings of the wise King came unto me. These are they:—*I sleep, but my heart waketh;* also, *Many waters cannot quench love;* and again, *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away;* and I fell to musing and thinking much upon them. Then there came upon me a vision, and behold, I walked in a land that I knew not, filled with a strange light I had not seen before; and I was clad as a traveller. In one hand I carried a staff, and I hid the other in the heavy folds of a colourless garment; I went forward with my eyes cast upon the earth, pondering, and dazed as one who sets forth upon a journey, but who knows not yet its goal. Then I besought my spirit to make itself clearer before me, and to show me, as in a glass, what I sought; then knowledge came upon me, and I looked within my spirit, and I saw my yearning visibly manifested, and great desire was born, and sprang forth and strengthened my feet and quickened my steps. Now I stood among olive-trees, whose leaves and boughs lay still upon the air, and no light was cast upon them. Then the

deep silence was broken by the stirring of the spirit within me; my frame appeared to be rent, and a faintness fell upon me, and for a little space I knew nothing, so powerfully the spirit wrought within me. Then afterwards, as when one who works miracles lays his healing finger upon another who is maimed, and makes him whole, so was my strength renewed, and I lifted up my eyes; and behold, the form of one stood by me, unclothed, save for a fillet binding his head, whereof the ends lay upon either side his neck; also upon his left shoulder hung a narrow vestment; in his right hand he bore a branch of dark foliage, starred with no blossoms; his face had on it the shadow of glad things unattained, as of one who has long sought but not found, upon whom the burden of humanity lies heavy; his eyes, half shaded by their lashes, gave forth no light.

I knew that my Soul stood by me, and he and I went forth together; and I also knew that the visible images of those things which we know only by name were about to be manifested unto me. When I gazed into the lampless eyes of my Soul, I felt that I saw into the depths of my own spirit, shadow meeting shadow. Then my Soul first spoke, and said unto me, *Thou hast looked upon me, and thou knowest me well, for in me thou but seest thyself, not hidden and obscured by the cruel veil of the flesh. I am come forth of thee for thy well-doing, therefore see to it that thou do me no injury. By me shalt thou attain unto the end I know thou seekest, for he whom we go forth to find may only in his fulness be manifested by my aid; for when he appears to*

those who, with dimmed eyes, grope in the waking darkness of the world, I am put aside, and he is not fully known. By me alone shalt thou behold him as he absolutely is; but in visions shall he be seen of thee many times before his full light be shed upon thee, and thy spirit shall be chastened and saddened because of them, but it shall not utterly faint. Look upon me, and I will support thee, and in thy need I will bear thee up. Looking upon me thou shalt read thine inmost self, as upon a scroll, and in my aspect shall thy spirit be made clear. Come.

Then we went forth towards a dim sea at ebb, lying under the veil of the mysterious twilight of dawn. On its grey sands sat one whom I knew for Memory. Over her face passed the changeful alternations of sun and cloud, shade and shine; the voice of the shell which she held to her ear unburied the dead cycles of the soul; it sang to her of good and evil things gone by, and her introverted eyes looked upon them as when one looks in a mirror upon all else save oneself. My Soul turned his dusky eyes upon me, and then I too heard the voice of the shell; and the ocean cast up my dead before my eyes, and all was unto me as though it had not gone by. Memory bore upon her head and breast a light rain of faded autumn leaves and blossoms, and upon her raiment small flecks of foam had already dried; her lips trembled with the unuttered voices of the past, but she did not weep.

Then I was carried back in the spirit to the time past, and as I walked forth by my Soul, my gaze was drawn inward, and I

beheld myself in one of the sunny places of the world; and there was a mist arising from the joy of nature, and my spirit seemed to dance within me. And I beheld, after a space, that the mist formed itself into many visible objects, which all gave me a delight such as one feels in looking upon the golden circles which play within the depths of a sun-lighted pool; and beyond the mist I discerned the forms of many whom Memory brought back to me; they had no radiance about their heads, but their countenances bore no shadow upon them, and the light in the air wherein they moved made a music which was very pleasant unto me. As the heart sits enthroned within the body, and its pulses inform it, so sat one in their midst whose spirit made their feet to dance and their mouths to sing; she rested beneath the shade of an autumn apple-tree, and the sun had kissed her body as it had kissed the fruit of the tree and made it glow: she was naked, but guile was removed from her, therefore she knew it not: the aspect of her face was as that of the face of a child who hears new things, and holds its breath, lest the one who relates them should make too quick an end; her grey eyes looked forth without fear, and in their soft depths were mirrored the things about her that she loved so well; by her side sported all joyous, simple creatures, and she was of them and one with them; the shadow of the burden of consciousness had not fallen upon her; she had not known the sickness of the soul, for within the ark of her body the soul had found no resting-place. Looking upon her, I saw that she was good, but I knew that there was

that about her that left me not content; she was even as sweet notes heard once and lost for ever.

Then I withdrew my gaze from my spirit, and raised my eyes and looked upon my Soul, and he spoke these words unto me: *It is well that thou hast thus looked upon Pleasure which is past, for with the greater ardour dost thou now desire him whom we go forth to seek: canst thou bear to look forward?* Then, as we went along, while the shallow wave drew back from the grey beach, my spirit took upon itself a great sadness; and lifting my eyes I beheld one, whom I then knew not, seeking shelter in the cleft of a rock. The shame that had been done him had made dim those thrones of Charity—his eyes; and as the wings of a dove, beaten against a wall, fall weak and frayed, so his wings fell about his perfect body; his locks, matted with the sharp moisture of the sea, hung upon his brow, and the fair garland on his head was broken, and its leaves and blossoms fluttered to the earth in the chill air. He held about him a sombre mantle, in whose folds the fallen autumn leaves had rested: and now he came forth of his sheltering place, and as he went along the light upon his head was blown about in thin flames by the cold breath of the sea; and I saw moving beside him in the grey air the spirits of those who had brought him to this pass, and the sound of their mockings fell upon my ears. Then my spirit sighed very heavily within me, and I could look no longer, for I discerned in that company the image of myself; and then all this vision passed away.

I held my regard upon the earth, and marvelled at what I had seen; and I communed in sadness with my spirit, for I then knew the part I had taken to hold Love in contumely, and how I had been one of those who plant rue, thinking to behold myrtles spring therefrom; and my spirit being chastened, I lifted my eyes to my Soul, and I saw upon his face the pale light of sorrow; yet I remembered how he spoke to me at the first, and told me that he would uphold me, and that my spirit should not faint utterly. Then he and I went on gradually ascending a sandy slope, patched here and there with scanty grass; and against the pale sky we saw one, for whom, looking upon him, my Soul dissolved in tears, so stricken with unavailing sorrow was he, so wounded beyond the hope of healing, bound hand and foot, languishing under the weight of his humanity, crushed with the burden of his so great tenderness. I looked upon the face of my Soul, and I knew that he, in whose presence we now stood, was Love, dethroned and captive, bound and wounded, bereft of the natural light of his presence; his wings drooping, broken and torn, his hands made fast to the barren and leafless tree; the myrtles upon his brow withered and falling; and upon that heart, from whose living depths should proceed the voice of the revolving spheres, there was a wound flowing with blood, but changing into roses of divinest odour as it fell. I stood motionless, my eyes refusing to look longer upon my stricken lord, then drawn unto my Soul, from whom I had no comfort; the voice of the shell of Memory yet sounded

in my ears, and I knew that the divine captive read my spirit's inmost thoughts; from his lips proceeded inaudibly the words, *Thou hast wounded my heart.*

After a moment of mystical agony, I raised my eyes; and behold, the vision of Love was gone. Yea, and upon my own heart the words of Love became engraven, and ringed it about with flame; and then I knew to the full how my hands had been among those which had bound and wounded Love thus. Albeit my spirit found how unworthy it was to receive the odour of the roses which came forth of his heart, yet it clung about me, and became as it were a crown to my head, and I was even lifted up because of my humiliation. Then I turned unto my Soul, and saw that his gaze was bent upon me with pity, and he spoke these words: *Alas! look well into thy spirit, search thy heart and pluck from it its dead garlands, cast them from thee and make it clean, and prepare it for him who shall hereafter enter therein; thou art even puffed up because the wound thou hast been one of those to deal sends forth divine fragrance; rather lament that thou hast not left whole the temple whence it comes forth: of thee and of thy like is its destruction: let us go upon our way.* Then we set forward, and silence was between us; the burden upon my spirit lay very heavy, and I knew not how to raise my eyes.

And now a sound of great lamentation clove the dull air; it was as the wail the mother lifts up when the last of the fruit of her body is wrested from her; it was as the cry of one whose

anguish may know no respite, whose soul is rent and cast abroad; it entered deep into my spirit. Then he who walked by me spake these words: *Canst thou lift thy gaze upon her who comes across the sea, upon her who is ravening like it, and is one with it? Look well upon her, for thou shalt behold in her one who would dash thee aside from the path which thou hast chosen. Look well unto thy heart, lest her breath dry up its springs. Behold.* Then I looked out to sea, and there came towards us one whose name I knew was Passion, she who had wounded and had sought to slay Love, but who, in her turn, was grievously wounded and tormented in strange, self-devised ways. The glory of her head was changed into the abiding-place of serpents whose malice knew no lull; her wasted beauty preyed upon itself; her face was whitened with pale fires, a hollow image of unappeased desire; her eyes flowed with unavailing tears; in her right hand she bore a self-wrought sword of flame, and in her left the goodly fruits and flowers she held were scorched and withered, and crawled upon by evil things; her feet were bound in inextricable folds; she was borne forth she knew not whither; her breath was as the breath of the hungry sea, and rest shall not be given unto her. And then the gentle voice of Memory spoke to me, and told me how she who was thus tormented had been at the first like unto her whom I saw in the spirit beneath the shade of the apple-tree, lying in the light of peace; and how the sun had also shone upon her, and made her face to shine; but she looked beyond the fair and happy things that were about her, and lusted

after she knew not what; and then the pleasant place wherein she abode with her happy fellows was taken from her, and, as one who hungers after what he has wittingly lost unto himself, so she craved and was not satisfied; she set at naught the gracious things that had been given unto her, and became the paramour of Hate; then she went about seeking to woo Love to her evil ends, and she fared to him as one humble and poorly clad; and Love had pity upon her, and bent his ear to her supplications, for he knew her not; but anon her aspect waxed cruel, and fierce, deceitful flames went forth of her eyes, and dreadful things clung about her, and shamed the air that he made holy, and with her fiery breath she well-nigh slew him; and when I looked upon her and knew that she would have slain Love, pity was congealed in my heart. Then the voice of the shell spoke to me by the spirit, and said, *Thou hast no pity on thyself.* And this vision also passed from us.

Then my Soul spoke unto me these words: *It is even so, thou hast no pity on thyself, for thou too hast essayed to slay Love, as it has been shown to thee, thou hast wounded him: let us set forth, and I will show thee a vision of that which may yet be averted.* Then we fared along by the sea, and its hollow breath fell sore upon my spirit: and anon we came upon a crowd who all bore different aspects, and again among these I chose forth one who was myself; some were mocking, and some carried an air of scorn upon them, and others of deceit; some feigned mourning, and others were not moved by what they saw. Then

I approached, bent down by a great awe of sorrow; and through my tear-dulled lashes I looked upon him who had been bound and wounded. He lay as one without life; the voice of his heart was dead within him; looking upon his face it seemed as if the end of all had come, and the air about him was laden with lamentations; upon his pallid brow one had thrown a spray of yew, but his body lay untended, and none had clothed him with his last garment; a thin flame rose from his heart and hovered upon it; and the cords wherewith he had been bound to the tree yet confined his hands, his feet, and his shattered wings; the light about his head had gone, and in its place the sea-froth made a crown; they who were gathered about him when we drew near had left him one by one. For myself a burning shame wrapped me round, and I sank upon the earth, and utterly abased my spirit for a space; then I heard the voice of my Soul speaking to me, and I lifted my eyes, and behold, the dolorous vision was gone. And, my heart laden with weeping, I turned unto my Soul, and he said these words unto me: *Did I not tell thee at the first that whilst thou hadst me by thy side, and didst me no injury, thy spirit should not utterly faint; therefore be not cast down at the grievous vision we go forth from beholding, but lay it as a sign upon thy heart; so shalt thou be warned in good time. We now bend our steps towards one who is mighty indeed, and it is given to no man to overcome him; yet when thou shalt look upon him, thou shalt see of how mild an aspect he is, and so thou shalt put terror away from thee. Come.*

And we yet went forth by the sea, until we came upon a temple standing alone; the breath from the heart of the sea came up as the litanies of the dead who lay beneath it, and girt it about and fell cold upon my spirit, and well-nigh made the pulses of my life to cease; but my Soul, faithful as when he first bent his eyes upon me by the olive-trees, supported me; and the door of the temple being touched by the branch which he bore, opened of itself, and my spirit yearned for the further and dreadful mystery that was to be shown me. It was well for me that there abode one beside me who would hold me up, or my heart, frozen within my breast, would have refused to support me, fainting as I was. I raised my eyes, whereof the light had gone out in the black air about us, and sought help of my Soul. He bent towards me, and said, *Cast fear from thee. Behold, thou shalt not fail.*

Before us and over us was a shadow as of the darkness before all things were; Hope was removed from the midst of it, and, looking upon it, Despair seemed to be enthroned therein; and the spirit wholly forgot that light had ever sprung forth upon the universe. Again I sought succour of him who stood beside me, and again it was vouchsafed to me: then, essaying to strengthen my eyes, I looked forward, and I beheld, slowly revealing himself in the heart of the thick darkness, one seated upon a dim and awful throne; he was wrapt about with sighs for raiment, and cypress, heavy with the tears of ages, was the crown upon his head; although his face was hidden in his potent hands when first he was manifested to my sight, yet I knew he wept,

and his weeping was as the gathered-up lamentations of all time; how sore it fell upon my heart I may not say; and a great pity was begotten within me, which went forth upon my spirit, towards his throne. Anon he lifted his face, and the sadness and mourning which go forth of the hearts of all men seemed transfigured upon it, and I saw that it was overshadowed with the dark mystery of life: it appeared to me as the face of one who dwells for ever without the Holy Place, upon whose brow the highest radiance may never fall. Then I thought upon the words my Soul had spoken to me, before we entered herein, when he told me how mild of aspect was the face I should look upon. For I saw that his mien had in it an exceeding gentleness, as of a creature that desires to caress and to be caressed, but who dares not approach, lest he bring terror with him—as of one who throughout all eternity bears upon him a loveless burden, whereof he may not rid himself: his was the pallor of one who had wrestled with another strong as himself, and had prevailed, but whose own dominion was as gall to him, the knowledge of whose hateful might gnawed his own spirit through and through with an unquenchable fire, whose power was his humiliation, whose strength his weakness. For a moment's space I could not look upon him, for the memories of his prowess crowded within my heart, and surged up in a bitter stream into my eyes. Then I sought the face of my Soul, and I saw upon its darkness the answer to my unuttered question, and I knew that I stood in the presence of him who had done battle with Love, Death,

who would love us did he dare, whom we would love did we dare; for, when he folds us about with the chill white raiment, he sets the seal of his love upon us; and, as the bridegroom and the bride stand linked together, overshadowed by the mystic saffron-coloured veil, and one spirit makes them one; so, at that hour when time slips from us, are we wedded to him before whom I stood, and with the sacrament of his kiss he signs us unto himself, and makes us of one flesh with him.

Then I lifted my eyes and looked yet again, and I saw that one stood by the throne, who held his finger upon his lip; he bore in one hand a crystal globe wherefrom the eyes of Death were ever averted, for he might not look therein; upon his head there bloomed a lotos flower, and lotos flowers hid his feet; the fathomless silence of the tomb came up and clothed him as with a pall, and he was girdled round with mystery, and mystery was written upon the air about him; his eyes were fixed upon the globe he held, and made dim because of what he saw therein; and the secrets of the tomb came forth and racked his face, and his face sweated with the pallid fires that rose from the dead he looked upon. And now my spirit welled up beseechingly within me, and looked forth of my eyes, and I turned them upon my Soul's face, as if supplicating; and his face was towards mine, and he knew the question that rested upon my lips, and he spoke and said, *Seek not to look upon the globe, for thou assuredly knowest it is given to no man to search its depths and live. He who bears it is Eternal Silence. Behold how his face*

is seared and furrowed with the things he knows, with the secrets that are laid bare to him. Let his name be a sign unto thee. He ceased to speak, and my spirit was drawn inward, and I pondered upon what he who brooded upon the throne before me had wrought; and I marvelled the more at his might when I had seen how humble of demeanour he was; and these thoughts came upon me:—When he had rent asunder those newly come together and made one, when he had set at nought the bitter desire of years and the late-found joy, did he wear upon his countenance that great sadness, well-nigh sweet? When the shriek of the mother shattered the night, because the sole one left of her withered blossoms had been plucked by him, and she was left as an uprooted plant cast upon the wave, was he then crowned with humility? When I thought upon those who had made the face of her that bare them to shine, and were as the sun's kiss to her, and how he had wrapt them in his chill raiment one by one in her sight, and I looked upon his eyes whence the tears ceased not to flow, my heart failed within me, and my marvelling became too hard for me. Then I turned towards my Soul and sought his gaze; he fixed it upon me, and spoke these words: *I have read thine inmost thoughts, and they are hard indeed. Of the thing whereon thou hast pondered thou canst, of thy nature, know nothing, but only this:—When he, before whom we stand, bends his face over those whose spirits wing them away, he takes upon it the exceeding gentleness thou hast seen, albeit it is not beheld of them who stand by sorrowing; for they*

have not looked upon his face; therefore they know it not until he lays his finger upon their lips, and touches them with his own. Let us go forth upon our way. And he led me as who should lead one lately risen from the couch of disease, weak, and before whom the earth seems to spin, and darkness was upon us.

And my Soul said, *Raise thine eyes and behold somewhat which shall gladden them, as it hath gladdened all men before. Let the balm of this vision sink into thy spirit; so shall it make thee whole of the sickness that came upon thee in the house of Death.* I lifted my eyes, and I saw coming towards us what had the appearance of a bird moving softly along the still, grey air. As it approached us, I perceived two presences, one reclining upon the other who gently fanned the air with great wings. And now a deep calm fell upon my spirit, such as one feels when the burden of a sharp trouble is averted, and my Soul and I wept when we saw him who was being thus carried towards us; he lay lightly across the breast of his supporter, cheek reposing against cheek; upon his head were two small fair wings, and round his brow were bound the flowers and buds of poppies; upon his face there shone a distant light of childhood; his parted lips breathed forth peace; the one who bore him smiled upon him, and rejoiced because of his burden. I knew that he who was winged was called Divine Charity, and his charge Sleep.

When we went forth out of the temple wherein abode Death, we came to a strange land stretching far out towards the wan sea, and inland the earth was overgrown with rank weeds; and

ever the voice of the shell of Memory sounded in my ears, and the land to right and left of me seemed to image my past years; the comfort which I had had of Sleep departed from me, and when I sought the eyes of my Soul no rays of consolation came forth therefrom, no blossoms of golden light yet starred the dull branch he bore: the shadow of the house of Death lay heavy upon him.

Albeit the burden of great bitterness that was shed upon my spirit by him I saw upon the gloomy throne had choked up the springs of my heart, yet within my breast the flame of yearning towards him who should be the end and crown of my journeying burst forth and impelled me onward; and my spirit told me that in a short space I should look upon him, in what guise I knew not. Therefore I turned my questioning eyes upon my Soul, and a light of sadness fell upon me from his face, and he spoke and said these words: *Alas! not yet shall it be vouchsafed unto thee to behold him in his sovereign glory, clad in radiance, but thou shalt see him as he has been carried forth whence we last looked upon him with grief-dulled eyes, when he was as one bereft of life. He, whose bliss it was to make his burden Love, is a supreme spring of pity, and men laving themselves in the streams that go forth of him, account them blessed; the hurt that has been done them passes by; they are made whole, for he slowly, yet surely, heals them; in his arms the broken of spirit are cherished; and when he holds the hearts that are cleft to his breast, they are once more bound together.* And I raised my eyes after he had spoken

these words, and sought to gather strength to look upon the coming vision.

Now again two came towards us, one bearing the other, and treading down the dark growth of weeds that thickened about us. When I saw him who reposed in the other's arms, a trembling seized me, and an awe came upon me—the awe which is begotten of exceeding pity : around his head shone a faint and flickering light, his white and perfect body was flecked here and there with blood, and, as when we saw him by the sea, betrayed, wounded, and helpless. He who supported him was ravaged with the storms of ages ; in his eyes there shone a light of infinite memories ; in his ears there rang the voices of unnumbered years ; his mien had in it the great tenderness of one unconquerable ; as a mother encircles with her arms a beloved and sorrowing child, and softly murmurs to him the songs of his infancy, so he pressed his bruised and smitten charge to his breast, comforting him with the universal voice.

And when this vision was fulfilled, the shell of Memory again sang in my ears, and I knew that what had past was the image of somewhat long gone by ; and I humbled my spirit when I knew that I had been among those who consign Love to the arms of Time ; casting the potent lord upon the earth, and taking no heed of him ; leaving the bruises wherewith he had been buffeted to be tended perchance of none. The earth was now covered with poppies, and the air was heavy with their odours, and I would fain have sought Sleep, but that I knew it

was forbidden unto me; moreover, it was given me to know by my Soul, through the spirit, that another vision was shortly to be vouchsafed unto me. The air was murmurous with faint sounds borne on the odour of the poppies: these were the echoes of the voices of my past years. I again sought the eyes of him who walked beside me, and, by the pale light of the first stars, I saw reflected in their depths the vague image of something which stamped a calm upon them; yet, as we set forth along that mystic land, our hearts were still burdened with the weariness of sorrow hard to cast away from us. Then, as my Soul turned towards me, I saw, in the shadows that gained strength about us, that a great presence was gathering itself, and, as we gazed upward, our vision rested upon one seated; around her head burned the light of the new-born stars, whose harmony made glad the pulses of the air; from her wide brow went forth a healing balm; in her aspect all men seek their rest and hide them in her shadow. She bore upon her knees one still beautiful, but pallid with woes, riven with wasting troubles, weary and dying; within her heart she hid his passing spirit; the waning golden light about him faded in the gloom of her hair, the falling blossoms of his head lightly strewed her dusky raiment wherewith she wholly enfolded him; he sank beneath her sacramental kiss, and Day was lulled to death in the all-embracing arms of Night.

And now we went forth upon our dimly lighted path, where the red and purple of the poppies faded into sombre

grey beneath the faint rays of the lately risen stars, and the depths of the still pools which lay to right and left of us sent up their pale reflections, and ever the utterances of the sea of my life spoke to me by the voice of the shell of Memory: and this night seemed to be a figure of my years gone by.

After my spirit had bent itself to the pondering of these things, I turned towards my Soul, and I saw that his eyes were heavy with the sense of what was to come; also my spirit leapt up, for albeit I was yet ignorant of what was to be shown forth, a voice within me told me that it should be of much import; and I bent towards him who was with me and gazed earnestly upon him, as one importunate, and who sought to be prepared and made ready to receive what would be to his great benefit. And my Soul, seeing my urgency, spoke and said, *Look well upon this shortly to befall us, and take great heed unto it, for it will be of weight to thee; and it shall be, as it were, the opening of the scroll whereon we may read the rest. He, whom we relax not in seeking, shall again be revealed unto thee; but, alas, again the pulses of thy heart shall fail when thou seest him; and by the lesson of the vision shalt thou learn that thou art yet unready to behold him in his fulness; yea, and this shall not be the last trial put upon thee. Now shall be set forth before thee somewhat of the history of his shame whom we seek, and, how, as one who brushes not away the cobwebs that have gathered themselves together upon the fair sculpture of one divine, and has even said Ha, ha, at the spiders busy upon it; so have men laid upon him the darkness of the earth, as*

a thick veil wherethrough his light shall not come. I cease; the vision will unfold itself clearly in thine eyes. Then I looked forward, and I saw that we approached what appeared to be a temple in ruin, long forsaken and not remembered; its crumbling marble walls and pillars, worn by time and storms, glimmered dimly beneath the stars; about it lay the decayed fragments of its dead beauty, and its entrances were choked up with poppies and clinging weeds, but to my spiritual vision there appeared a radiance about it that made me know that the light of him whom I sought penetrated the depths of its enduring gloom. Our heads bowed, and in silence we approached the entrance; we put aside the rank growths which sought to hinder our going in, and stood on its grass-grown threshold; then the silence of my heart was broken by its weeping, and a faintness fell upon me when I lifted up my eyes to the vision now revealed to me. Before us was an altar-like monument carved with a legend of old time, whereon the joyful creatures who sported in procession across it were wasting in decay, time-discoloured and riven; upon it he lay, whom, when we stood in the presence of Death, we saw borne to earth by Divine Charity; he was wrapped about with the slumber of those upon whom no shadow has fallen, upon his face there lay that far-off light of childhood; the mildness of his half-formed smile drew the spirit unto itself, his lashes were yet moist with late-shed tears, born not of sorrow but of tenderness; looking upon him, our wave-tossed spirits found their haven, and rest fell upon us.

Before I dared to look upon him who was present with Sleep, and whom I have not wearied of seeking, I saw by the spirit that one rose impalpably from the heart of the poppies, and hovered upon them, lapped in his half-shut wings; his eyes were not covered by their lids, yet it seemed as if slumber had fallen upon them; he fixed his mystic gaze upon a crystal globe he held in both his hands, wherein I knew by the spirit he saw pass the dreams of those who sleep beneath the stars; his locks were softly lifted by the air, and his lips trembled with the weight of the myriads of visions he called forth; his bent face was overshadowed by the exceeding sadness of one who knows the thoughts of men.

Again I raised my eyes, and I saw her who had lately been revealed to us receiving the passing breath of day; with unrelaxing gaze, and eyes from whose depths comes forth all gentleness, she watched Sleep, her beloved son; and she, to whom all was as an open scroll, wept when she looked upon him whose heart was as the heart of a little child; her dusky locks flowed forth upon the air, and from their shade the stars sent down their beams; her garments were fragrant with the blossoms begotten of Day's death, and hymns proceeded from the silence that was about her; upon her all-supporting arms, and hidden in her raiment, she bore those who slept and dreamed, and those who watched; she whispered peace unto those who know it not when she is not; she put away from them the sword, and healed the wounds that gape and bleed when

she is not by to close them; she drew the spirit of the mother to her child who dwells in far-off lands, and in her arms the long-separated were brought together; beneath her shadow the lost little one yet again nestled upon her mother's breast; she hid the stricken in her heart, by her the forsaken were taken back to the hearts of the forsakers; she brooded over the uncared-for with the soft care of her wings, and by her the forgotten were brought to remembrance.

Then I sought my Soul in trembling, for I knew that there was one present on whom I had not yet dared to look, and my Soul said to me by the spirit, *Behold him whom we seek, but we are not yet prepared.* Then I turned my gaze upon him; in the gloom of the unremembered temple he sat in all lowliness upon the fragment of a broken frieze, whereon the sculptured histories of his ancient glory crumbled and fell away, forgotten and uncared for, blighted by the breath of ages, stained with the rust of storms that know no mercy; his red and golden raiment hung loose about his limbs, and the blossoms from his hair had fallen crisped and dead upon his shoulders; the tears of a divine agony yet lay upon his cheek; the radiance which I had seen by my spirit, before my feet had gained the threshold of the temple, sprang from the wound upon his heart; and when I looked upon and saw it illumine the dim eyes of my Soul, my spirit abased itself, and my gaze fell upon the earth. Then I knew that this vision had been fulfilled, and my heart, ringing with the inner voices of the things that had been revealed to us, and my eyes

laden with their images, I again turned unto my Soul, and saw that upon his countenance rested the light that came forth of Love's wound, and made it shine; and, as we departed from the temple, I rejoiced secretly at this; also I felt strengthened and gladdened at heart because of Sleep; and my spirit was softened by reason of his smile. And we turned our steps towards the waning stars.

And the awe which comes upon man at the passing away of night fell upon us, and I bethought me again of the words of the wise king, *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.* And a strong yearning was begotten within me, and a sob burst forth from my mouth up out of my heart, and my lips said inaudibly, *Ah, that the day would break, and the shadows verily and indeed flee away*; and the spirit essayed to escape, and in travail I sought help of my Soul, and it was given unto me, and he spoke these words: *Put thy sorrowing away from thee, for the sword shall not again cruelly cleave thy spirit; yet, as I told thee before we stood upon the threshold of the ruined temple we have erewhile left, another trial shall be laid upon thee, and the spirit must needs crouch beneath the weight of it; but, albeit sorrow shall go up as a mist before thee, when thou beholdest what is at hand, thou shalt see, as behind a thick cloud, the presence of light; in the coming vision shall be dimly heralded his effulgence; it shall appear in thine eyes as it were the strong weeping that goes before joy; and as the springing forth of hope from despair: it shall not be seen of thee as a dark mystery; thy spirit will look*

into it and know it. He made an end of speaking, and by the pale beams of the sinking stars I saw an image dimly mirrored in his eyes. I removed my gaze from his face, and looked abroad, and beheld, dark against the wan air of the dying night, Love seated upon a throne lowly and poor, and not worthy to bear him,—no longer, indeed, wounded and bleeding, but still bereft of his perfect glory; in his eyes there shone a soft light of suffering not yet past, but on his brow, where poppies were mingled with the myrtles, there lay the shadow which falls upon one not remembered; upon his parted lips hovered the half-formed smile of a child who halts between weeping and laughter; he was fully clothed in raiment of dim and sullied red and gold; in one hand he bore a poppy branch bound about the myrtle, from which the stars had fallen one by one, and in the other a golden globe whose brightness was obscured and shamed by dust; his feet were wholly hidden in the thick growth of weeds and poppies that crowded round his throne; he spoke no word, only the faint sounds in the air about him and the grief-dimmed eyes of my Soul told me that he was Love imprisoned in an alien land of oblivion—forgotten, put away.

Again my heart sank, and the flowing of its streams waxed dull, and the words of him bound by the sea burned upon it with a more ardent flame, and the vision we passed from filled my eyes, and came forth of them in bitter tears; yet I forgot not the saying of my Soul, that this should be as the darkly revealed sign of the joy to come, for was not Love enthroned—poorly

indeed—and had not the shadow of suffering well-nigh lifted, albeit indeed its sear remained? But I called up strength, and bound it as a girdle about me, and looked upon the countenance of him beside me; and behold, upon it, despite the eyelids drooping with foregone grief, I saw the longed-for smile, and I took content upon me.

Our course now lay along an upward slope, whereon the poppies waxed scantier, and the weeds less rank; a soft mossy grass soothed our wayworn feet, and I could see by the light of the dying stars that small golden blossoms lay in a pattern upon the sward. As we neared the brow of the hill, I knew that a yet unseen and mysterious presence was about to be revealed to us; soft breezes bore his light to us upon their wings, and voices from the passing Night spoke to us of him; he was half-seated, half-lying, upon a height beyond which was stretched out the faintly glimmering sea; there lay upon him yet the shadow of the Night, but his face had upon it the radiance of an expected glory, the light of glad things to come; his eyes were yet soft with the balm of Sleep, but his lips were parted with desire; his breath was as that of blossoms that awake and lift up their heads and give forth their odours; his dusky limbs were drawn up as if in readiness to depart, and his great and goodly wings softly beat the air; with one hand he cast away his dim and dewy mantle from him, and with the other he put aside the poppies that had clustered thickly about him; as he turned his head to the East, the poppies fell from his hair, and the light rested

upon his face; the smile it kindled made the East to glow, and Dawn spread forth his wings to meet the new-born Day. And when the Day was seated on his throne, we passed along a pleasant land that lay beneath the light of a great content; and the radiance yet lingered on the countenance of my Soul, and the sadness that had made the curves of his mouth heavy, and had dimmed his eye, now gradually departed, and there came upon him an aspect of calm, as of one certain of a good thing shortly to befall, although he knows not fully what it may be; and when I looked upon his eyes my spirit took heart, and I girded myself and set forward with my head no more bent; and we were met by many who had been shown me in my former dreams, and who all bore the reflection of a light upon their faces.

Also I saw with great joy many whom I knew by name, and who were dear to me, and they were clad in garments of beauty, so that it joyed my eyes to behold them. And it appeared to me as though I felt beating upon my breast the warmth that came from theirs towards me; and youth was set as a crown upon their heads, and they bore branches blossoming from the breath of youth, and its divine essence coloured all the air about them; and I discerned one face in that company beloved of me beyond the rest; a northern sun had set a ruddy sweetness upon it, and southern suns had kissed it into perfect bloom; from the depths of the grey eyes welled up and sprang forth the spirit of Love, and, most loath to depart, yet brooded

upon them as the dove in early time upon the waters; a sacred light, as of the guileless dreams of childhood, looked out from them and gladdened my own, and the softness of Sleep was bound upon the head. When I looked upon the face, I felt, indeed, that my travail was well-nigh over, and as it passed from me, and was lost to me, my spirit bathed its dusty wings in the warm, glad tears that bubbled from my heart, and was refreshed. And when the throne of day was set well-nigh above our heads, and there was that in the air which moves the heart of nature, we rested ourselves beside a running stream, whose waters brought joyous sounds from afar, as it were the long-forgotten songs and gentle voices of our childhood, yet laden with a heavier and fuller harmony from a source we knew not yet; and as we journeyed on in the dawn of the evening, an awe fell upon me, as when one enters upon a new and unknown way, and all the air about teemed with the echoes of things past and the vague intimations of things to come.

Then my Soul turned towards me and spoke these words: *Lay upon thy spirit a glad humility, and essay to strengthen thine eyes, that they may bear to behold the things which shall shortly be brought before thee to thy comfort and solace. As thou hast hitherto only seen him we seek sinking beneath the burdens that have been laid upon him by thee and by the like of thee; as thou hast seen the glory about him shattered and made dull by reason of the wounds and weakness the bitter darkness of the world has inflicted, so shalt thou now behold him gathering his natural power about*

him, and clothed with light; but not yet shall it be given to thee to see him in the plenitude of his glory. I will support thee. Look up.

And now I raised my eyes and looked upon the stream, and it seemed to me as though the waters were cleft apart, and there was a hollow in their midst; and lo, the air about it appeared changed, and its pulses stood still, and the sounds I had heard borne on its wave collected themselves together and took form; and the form was of the colour of the sun-lighted sea, and within it I saw one borne gently upward, naked, and glowing exceedingly; the stars of the living myrtles burned fresh upon his hair, and his countenance was as the supreme excellence of youth transfigured, the wound upon his heart was healed, and on its place I saw burning a ruddy flame, whereof the tongues came forth to me and touched my own, whereon were engraven the words which I heard Love speak when we saw him bound to the tree, and in their stead the flame wrought this saying, letter by letter, *Many waters cannot quench Love, neither can the floods drown it;* and now the radiant mist wherein he was lifted up rose and enfolded him, and hid his aspect from me, and its form was dispersed, and it was changed to gentle sounds in the stream, and all the air about became as it was before.

Then I turned my eyes upon my Soul and saw that he appeared well pleased, and the sparkling light sent up from the ripples of the stream whereby we sat played across his brow and illumined his dusky hair. Then I knew that I should be gladdened by what he was going to tell me. He spoke and said, *Thou hast*

well seen that the travail of Love is past and gone by, and content and joy are spread over the whole air because of it. Now there will arise upon thy vision a mystery which thou wilt, of thy nature, comprehend but dimly; yet fail not to look well upon it, for by it the springs of the heart of the universe are fed and made glad; and because Love is thus gone up from the wave in thy sight, it is given to thee to look upon it.

He ceased to speak, and I turned my gaze in the direction where I had seen the last vision; and behold, again the air seemed changed, and I saw a happy light gathering itself there, and it seemed, as it were, to be formed of the warmth which makes the earth bring forth its fruit; and there appeared to me within the light an inner living glow, and the glow divided itself in twain, and became two Holy Ones, each having six wings; their limbs moved not, but the ardour wherewith their spirits were endued bore them along. As one sees in a soft air two flower-laden branches bend one towards the other, and, mingling, send forth a two-fold fragrance, so I saw one of these impelled towards his fellow and lightly touch him, and a living pulse seemed to beat in the flame that went forth from them, and a form was given to it, and a heart informed it, and all the fire-coloured air about it breathed hymns at this marvellous birth. Albeit, my spirit had not yet been fully purified, so that I should clearly know what this mystery showed forth; yet I was greatly rejoiced in that it was given me to see it. And now my Soul turned towards me and spoke these words, *What thou hast just beheld it is vouchsafed*

to no man to comprehend, save he see the glory that comes forth of the Holy Place; therefore gird up thy spirit that thou be ready for the call of him who shall lead thee thereunto. What thou hast seen it was given to the three Holy Ones to know fully when they were cast into the furnace; for as the serpent-rod which the prophet threw forth swallowed its fellows, the greater eating the lesser, so did the fiercer flames of that Charity which thou hast erewhile seen wonderfully and mystically begotten go forth of the righteous children's hearts, and devour and utterly dry up the heat that burned about them.

He ceased to speak, and then I turned my gaze upon his eyes, and rejoiced greatly through my spirit to see a brighter glow upon them, as from the expected coming of the long-desired; and when I cast my eyes upon the earth I discerned there many happy creatures, joyous and beautiful, and such as have no existence in the neighbourhood of evil. After a space, and when my eyes had been gladdened by reason of these things, I again turned them upon my Soul, and I knew that what we sought would now shortly be revealed to us. A weakness fell upon me, but my Soul supported me; we looked forward, and saw one approaching clothed about with a soft light; he moved towards us, gently lifted by the spirit from the ground, neither flying nor running. Ever and again his feet, wherefrom sprang glowing wings, touched the earth and caused it to bring forth flowers; his head was bound with a fillet of violet, and violet blossoms breathed upon by Love; he carried a mystic veil of saffron

colour, which depended from his head upon his shoulders even to the ground, and his shining body was half girt with fawn-skin; in his hand he carried a staff, which was as the rod of the high priest, for as I looked upon it its barrenness burst forth in almond bloom; and, as when the prophet put away his shoes from off his feet before the Holy Place, and beheld the bush burning with fire but not consumed, even so I saw upon the staff the dancing tongues of flame cling round the wood, but leave it scatheless; and this thing appeared marvellous in my eyes, and I thought upon the words my Soul had spoken to me concerning the three Holy Ones, and how the fires which wrapped them about did but make them stronger and fairer than before.

And now, looking upon the face of him who came towards us, it appeared as the face of one dwelling in the Holy Place, glowing with the perfect peace which is shed of Love, for he had borne the Very Love within his hands, therefore upon him the shadow of the burden of humanity had not rested; and now, encouraged by his gentle mien, and by the strengthened light upon the eyes of my Soul, I went forward until I set myself in front of him who bore the saffron veil; the waves of Love that moved about him laved my face, they refreshed me, and appeared to make my self-consciousness sit lightly upon me, and to loosen me from the grip of my humanity, but it was not yet vouchsafed to me to cast it from me.

As the holy seer prayed to be purged of his transgressions by the burning coal of Charity, so I too desired that my lips

should be touched, and my eyes made clear and worthy to behold those things whence flow the springs of life. When the aspect of him who bore the blossoming staff fell full upon me it generated a stronger yearning towards the Beatific Vision, and the distant harmonies of the spheres became clearer unto me; I then first felt conscious that a faint light hovered about my own head, like that upon the head of my Soul, and the voice of him who bore the mystic veil spoke to me by the spirit, and I heard these words, *Before thou art worthy to behold Him whom thou hast so long sought in the perfect fulness of His glory, thou must be purged of all grossness, thou must be clothed utterly with change of raiment, and the dead fruit of thy heart and of thy lips must be put away from thee; and when these things shall have been done, yea, even then thou shalt not see His full effulgence with none between it and thee, but through the veil of Sleep shall it be revealed unto thee. Follow me.* Then, chastened by these words, I again bent my head, and my Soul led me forward.

Then I turned unto him and bent a look upon him as of one questioning, and, seeing my aspect, he turned towards me and spoke these words: *Wouldst thou learn who is this thus leading us on towards Him we seek; thou sawest his name upon his brow, but the lingering darkness of thy spirit forbade thee to decipher it aright; he it is whom thou hast known since first thou camest away from thy mother's breast, for with what thou receivedst therefrom, thou acceptedst him; looking upon him thou lookest upon what has ever dwelt within thy heart of hearts, for by him shall the Very Love be revealed unto thee; he has no beginning,*

for throughout all ages has he stood by and ministered to Him we seek and shown Him forth: it has been desired of many from the first years unto this day to put him aside and even to slay him, but, like the flame-girt, unconsumed staff he bears, he passes through the fire, and even in these latter days gives forth the light that has first been shed upon him. The violets upon his brow are those of young time, yet the dew is fresh upon them; and though it was believed of many that his staff was sapless and withered, behold how the air about it is made fragrant by the blossoms that it bears. Faithful is he through all; he holds on high his lamp so that those who look above the low fogs that cling about the earth may be led of it, and the flames about him penetrate the thick darkness of the waking world. Many have sought to tear the wings from off his feet that they may not see the light that springs forth from them; yet still the radiance of Him whom he shows forth makes his feet shed light abroad, and still the earth yields flowers at his approach. Let us follow him.

He who bore the flame-girt staff floated lightly along his path of flowers, and the glow about his winged feet made their petals to expand. And now in all humility I stood upon the threshold of a glowing temple; the air about it was moved by the breath of Him who dwelt within, its waves were heavy with the odours that came forth of His presence, and its pulses echoed with the voices of the worlds that revolve because of Him. Within the court of the temple I heard the sound of wings that ceased not to beat the air; then a tremor came upon my hands

and feet, for remembrance brought to me the image of him we saw by the grey sea, bound hand and foot, and the voice from his heart sounded yet in my ears. Then one came unto me, having six wings, which overshadowed my Soul and me, and, though I looked not upon his face, I knew he touched my forehead and lips with it, and they were purified by fire, but not seared with its sting. Then his fellow came unto me, and put away my traveller's garb from off me, and clothed me with a vestment in colour like the heart of an opal, and over my left shoulder he laid a stole tinted like a flame seen through water, and he placed upon my head a veil which covered my eyes, but did not dim my spiritual vision; and now again the words which came from Love's mouth, when I saw him bound by the sea, rang in my ears, *Thou hast wounded my heart*, and a deeper humility fell upon me. Then I heard him of the winged feet say unto my Soul, *He is prepared, come;* and I was borne along by the spirit through the outer court and toward the Holy Place, and ever the rushing sound of the wings became louder and louder, and I knew that the temple was filled with seraphim, for the veil which hung over my eyes but shielded them from a light which, when it should fall upon them, would blind them; also I knew that he whose head was bound with violets had left us, and consigned me to the care of my Soul.

Now there arose before me the image of him whom we had seen sleeping in the ruined temple; his arms were wound about his head, which lay back upon them; he was naked, but his

form was wrapped about with the soft star-lighted air ; his lashes were no longer moist with tears, but his face shone as became one through whom the Very Love was to be revealed. And now I felt the heart of the universe beat, and its inner voices were made manifest unto me, the knowledge of the coming presence of the Very Love informed the air, and its waves echoed with the full voices of the revolving spheres. Then my Soul spoke to me and said, *In the beginning of time the universe and all that was therein was grey, and its springs were without life, as a fair body, joyless and lacking beauty, because no spirit stirs it; light had not come upon it ; and, as when one is in a trance, the pulses are dead, and await the aid of that which shall enter them and make the dead alive ; even so, there sprang forth, of its own power and holy ardour, a light over the face of all things, and the heat of it made them glow, and the grey became green: the golden air sang over all, and an universal hymn arose and went up, and its voice yet gladdens the circling worlds. As the prophet saw in the dark valley the dead bones come together and take life upon them, even so Love, who was the light, smiled upon the uninformed countenance of things, and it was kindled because of it ; and there went from him a two-fold essence, whereof the streams have flowed for ever, and cease not to flow ; and by them are we upheld, and our spirits replenished ; and, as the priest holds the flower-starred crown over the heads of the bridegroom and the bride, so now and again do the streams unite within us, and Love, whence they go forth, is the crown over us and the light*

about us. But through the thick veil of the darkness of the world this is not seen or known of men, but only through the spirit may it be made clear unto us; and the spirit soars aloft rejoicing, and is girt about with delight because of it.

And now the image of Sleep filled the orbit of my sight, and through the veil of his form I saw him who bore the mystic saffron raiment wherewith he had covered his hands. My spirit well-nigh fainting, I turned unto my Soul, and knew by the increasing glow upon him that strength was given me yet again to lift my eyes. Well was it for me that what came was revealed to me through the veil of Sleep, else I could not have borne to look upon it.

From out the uplifted hands of him who stood within the Holy Place there sprang forth a radiance of a degree so dazzling that what else of glory there was within the temple was utterly obscured; as one seeing a thin black vapour resting before the face of the mid-day sun, so I saw upon the radiance the brooding cherubim, their wings meeting, their faces hidden; I saw within the glory, one who seemed of pure snow and of pure fire, the Very Love, the Divine Type of Absolute Beauty, primæval and eternal, compact of the white flame of youth, burning in ineffable perfection.

For a moment's space I shielded my eyes from the blinding glow, then once more raised them upon the Beatific Vision. It seemed to me as though my spirit were drawn forth from its abiding place, and dissolved in unspeakable ardours; anon

fiercely whirled round in a sphere of fire, and swiftly borne along a sea of throbbing light into the Very Heart. Ah, how may words shew forth what it was then vouchsafed to me to know? As when the thin, warm tears upon the cheek of the sleeping bride are kissed away by him who knows that she is wholly his, and one with him; as softly as his trembling lips are set upon the face transfigured on his soul, even so fell upon my heart, made one with the Heart of Love, its inmost, secret flame: my spirit was wholly swallowed up, and I knew no more.

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Then all this wondrous vision was fulfilled, and looking upon the sky, I saw that the stars had set and the dawn had spread his wings over the world; and again the words of the sage King, *Until the day break and the shadows flee away*, came into my mind.

THE END.

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